

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

# FSIS NOTICE

26-01

7/30/01

## FOODSAFETYJOBS ONLINE PILOT

### I. PURPOSE

This notice announces a one-year FoodSafetyJobs Online (FSJO) pilot and explains the system's features and related procedural changes. (**NOTE:** The timeframe may be extended.)

### II. BACKGROUND

FSJO is a new Internet-based automated system that streamlines and speeds up the hiring process. The system provides electronic vacancy posting, and candidate application and evaluation.

### III. EVALUATION

The system's effectiveness will be evaluated during the pilot to determine if it will be retained.

### IV. COVERAGE

A. The pilot will begin with:

1. Headquarters and field vacancies at all grade levels in the GS-318 (Secretary), GS-326 (Office Automation Clerical/Assistance), GS-334 (Computer Specialist), and GS-344 (Management Assistant) series.

2. Field Compliance Officer positions, GS-1801-12 and -13.

B. Outlook messages to "All Users" will announce the pilot's start date and when new series are added.

C. Bargaining Unit positions will not be included.

**DISTRIBUTION:**  
All Employees

**NOTICE EXPIRES:**  
August 1, 2002

**OPI:**  
HRD - Employment Services  
and Policy Branch

## V. SUMMARY OF FEATURES

The following system features and merit promotion procedures:

### A. Remain the same under FSJO.

1. Applicants have an equal opportunity to compete for vacancies.
2. Positions are advertised through vacancy announcements.
3. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Qualification Standards and other job-related criteria are still the basis for evaluation.
4. Selection is made from the best-qualified candidates.
5. The interview policies in FSIS Directives 4335.1, Merit Promotion Plan, and 4335.8, Interview Policy for GS 13 Through 15 Positions are still in effect.

### B. Change under FSJO.

1. Vacancy announcements are found at [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov) and [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov).
2. Vacancies in the FSJO pilot are **not** listed in the FSIS Biweekly Summary Listing. Vacancy announcements are open for a minimum of 10 business days. (**NOTE:** Positions in the pilot are not subject to the 30-day announcement period required by the FSIS Diversity Recruitment Plan because announcements are available immediately.)
3. Applicants apply for a position online by registering in the system, entering a resume, and answering specific questions related to their qualifications. Narrative statements addressing knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are **not** required.
4. Applications must be saved in the system by 11:59 p.m. on the closing date to be considered. (**NOTE:** Applicants are expected to apply online since FSJO is an automated system. Contact the human resources (HR) representative listed on the vacancy announcement **before the closing date** if problems occur.)
5. The system automatically rates and ranks applicants based on responses to specific job-related questions. Promotion panels are not used to evaluate applications.
6. An HR specialist certifies the best-qualified candidates by determining a quality distinction in the ranked scores. A subject matter expert, who is not the selecting official, may assist in this determination.

7. The same evaluation and certification processes are used regardless of the number of applicants.
8. The HR offices send e-mail notifications to applicants.



Deputy Administrator  
Office of Management

ATTACHMENT

1 FSJO Pilot Questions and Answers

## Food Safety Jobs Online Pilot Questions and Answers

### **ABOUT THE SYSTEM**

***Q1: How does FSJO work?***

A1: FSJO automates the Agency's hiring process. The HR office uses the Internet to post job vacancies directly at [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov). Interested applicants may review vacancy announcements and apply online by entering a resume and answering questions about their background and qualifications. The system automatically screens, rates and ranks applicants based on their answers. An HR specialist reviews the list, certifies the best-qualified candidates, and forwards the certificate to the selecting official. Notifications are e-mailed to applicants.

***Q2: What does it mean to apply online?***

A2: The applicant registers, enters a resume, and answers questions in the vacancy announcement using the Internet. The system establishes a user account, and assigns a user ID and a password that an applicant may change. Applicants may access the system anytime wherever Internet access is available. The applicant's personal information and resume are stored in the system and may be updated at any time.

***Q3: Is the system secure?***

A3: Yes. FSJO runs on an encrypted, secure database. FSIS owns the data, and only certain HR specialists have access to personal data. (**EXAMPLE:** A social security number (SSN) and date of birth must be entered as part of the initial registration process. Only personnel directly involved in the hiring process may access this information. Individual sets of data on race, gender, national origin, and disability status are not accessible to anyone. See Q&A 27.) Applicants must enter a password to access account information, and should not share the password with anyone. For further information, visit [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov) and click on "Security."

***Q4: I am uncomfortable using my SSN to establish an account in the system. Is there any way I can apply online without my SSN?***

A4: No. The system will not allow users to apply without an SSN. The SSN is one of the few reliable means that HR can use to distinguish between applicants. Many applicants have the same name, and may even have the same birth date. If someone attempts to open a new account with an applicant's SSN, the system administrator will be alerted.

**Q5: *Is it possible to have multiple identities or more than one e-mail address when using the system?***

A5: No. Applicants are identified in the system by the SSN, user ID number, and the password entered during the registration process. FSJO will not allow an applicant to create more than one account using the same e-mail address or SSN. Electronic communications to applicants can only be sent to one e-mail address.

**Q6: *What if I want to apply online, but don't have a computer at home? Can I use my office computer to access FSJO?***

A6: FSIS employees may use computers at work to register and apply for vacancies, but work assignments and official duties have priority. (**NOTE:** FSIS employees are not entitled to overtime, compensatory time, or credit hours under maxiflex for the purpose of applying for positions.)

Most public libraries, college placement offices, State and municipal employment offices, and community centers have computers and Internet access for patrons at no charge.

**Q7: *What if I have a computer at home with Internet access, but don't have an e-mail account?***

A7: Applicants **must** provide an e-mail address to register in FSJO. Some Internet service providers offer free e-mail accounts, such as [www.hotmail.com](http://www.hotmail.com), [www.mail.lycos.com](http://www.mail.lycos.com), or [www.mail.yahoo.com](http://www.mail.yahoo.com). Applicants may visit one of these web sites to register for a free e-mail account, or use the Outlook e-mail account at work.

FSIS employees who use their Outlook e-mail account at work must use the Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) e-mail address. (To find the SMTP address in Outlook, click on "Tools", then "Address Book." Locate and double-click own name, then select the "E-mail Addresses" tab.)

The designated e-mail address will be used to contact applicants about the status of applications. In some cases, additional information may be requested, which applicants must submit to the HR office within a specified time period (typically 2 business days). Be sure to use a frequently monitored e-mail account to allow enough time to provide supplemental information that may be requested.

## **LOCATING AND APPLYING FOR VACANCIES**

**Q8: *How do I access FSJO?***

A8: Go to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov), or to OPM's web site, [www.usajobs.opm.gov](http://www.usajobs.opm.gov), which also links to the FSJO system.

**Q9: *Am I required to apply for a vacancy when I go into the system?***

A9: No. Applicants may browse vacancy announcements, including the questions, but are not required to transmit any information.

**Q10: *How do I apply for a specific vacancy?***

A10: Follow these steps:

1. Go to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov).
2. Click on the "Login" button and register as a user.
3. Enter the personal information requested, such as name, SSN, address, telephone number, date of birth, e-mail address, etc.
4. Answer "core" questions that are used to screen applicants for basic eligibility, such as career or career-conditional status, veterans preference, and highest grade held.
5. Type or copy a resume into the system.
6. Answer a set of questions that are related to the specific vacancy.

Applicants may edit saved information at any time. When applying for a specific vacancy, the resume must be entered and the core and position-specific questions answered before the announcement closes.

**Q11: *Do I have to answer questions for every job I apply for? Some of them have the same questions but different job numbers?***

A11: Applicants only have to answer the "**core**" personal information questions **one time**, when first registering. (See Q&A 10.) Applicants may change the answers to the core questions at any time.

Applicants must answer the **position-specific questions for every vacancy**. These questions are considered part of the vacancy announcement since they are used to establish the applicant's qualifications for a particular job.

**Q12: *What if I don't answer the position-specific questions, and/or enter a resume?***

A12: Applicants must enter their resume **and** answer the core and position-specific questions in the vacancy announcement by the time the vacancy closes in order to be considered.

***Q13: When exactly do jobs close?***

A13: Positions close at 11:59 p.m. on the closing date of the announcement, based on the location of the servicing personnel office. Headquarters announcements (serviced by the Washington, DC HR office) close at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, and field announcements (serviced by the Minneapolis, MN HR office) close at 11:59 p.m. Central Time. After midnight, jobs that have closed will not be available for review or application.

**ENTERING A RESUME**

***Q14: Can I create a resume online?***

A14: Yes. Once an applicant answers the core questions and establishes a user ID and password, the applicant may create a resume and save it in the system. When a vacancy closes, the system automatically attaches the applicant's resume to the vacancy announcement.

***Q15: What information should I put in my resume?***

A15: The following information must be included in the resume:

1. **Full Name**
2. **Mailing Address**
3. **Day and Evening Telephone Numbers** (including area code)
4. **Education** - Include the following information, as applicable. In addition, some jobs may require certain coursework. This coursework will be identified in the questions relating to the jobs.
  - High School - School name, city, and state; Date of diploma or GED.
  - College/University - School name, city, and state; major field of study; and type and year of any degrees received. Also include total credits earned and indicate whether semester or quarter hours.
  - Vocational/trade/business or technical school - School name, city, and state, and date of certificate or graduation.
5. **Work Experience** - Include details on all paid and unpaid work experience that is relevant to the job for which you are applying. List your most recent jobs first. For each job include:
  - Job title (and grade level, if it was a Federal job)

- Duties and accomplishments
  - Employer's name and address
  - Supervisor's name and telephone number
  - Starting and ending dates (month and year)
  - Hours worked per week
  - Salary
6. **Other Qualifications** - Including job-related training courses, job-related skills (such as typing speed, computer skills, professional licenses), foreign languages, job-related honors, awards, special accomplishments, publications, memberships in professional or honor societies, and leadership activities.

***Q16: Should I include the vacancy number of the job for which I'm applying?***

A16: No. There is no need to type the vacancy number in the resume field because the applicant's resume is automatically attached to every announcement for which he or she applies.

***Q17: How do I input my resume into the system?***

A17: Go to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov), and select the "Edit Personal Information" button. Toward the middle of the first screen is a box for the resume. The resume may be typed directly into this box, or the applicant may "copy and paste" it from another word processing package.

The resume box holds 16,000 characters, which equals about 6 typed pages. The system allows only for simple text, and does not accept special formatting, such as bold print, italics, and underlining.

To copy a resume from a word processing document, highlight the entire text of the resume in the word processing document, then hold down the **CTRL** key and press **C** (to copy the text). Then return to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov) and log into the system. Select the "Edit Personal Information" button and click "Enter". Go to the resume box, place the cursor inside the resume box, then hold down the **CTRL** key and press **V** (to paste the text). Applicants can also type new text, or "copy and paste" text within the resume box using the **CTRL-C** and **CTRL-V** process.

**Q18: *When I copy and paste my resume into FSJO, it has additional characters and spacing problems. How can I correct this?***

A18: Save a resume in a "text only" format using a word processing application, such as Word or WordPerfect.

In Word, go into the resume document. On the document menu, click on "File", then "Save As..." in the dialog box, click on the drop-down arrow across from "Save As Type". Highlight "ASCII DOS Text", then press "Save." In a WordPerfect document, click "File", and then "Save As" at the bottom of the screen. In the "File Type" drop down box, highlight "ASCII DOS Text", then press "Save".

Remove additional characters, such as bullets, underlines, or hard returns. Copy and paste the text resume into the online resume box in FSJO. (See Q&A 17.)

**Q19: *I already have an FSIS Application for Promotion (Form 4335-1) completed. Can I load this into the system?***

A19: An applicant must edit Form 4335-1 extensively to include the information required in a resume. The resume and Form 4335-1 have very different formats. On Form 4335-1, employees address each KSA separately in a narrative format. In the resume format, applicants are asked to provide certain information about relevant work experience, education, and other qualifications. (See Q&A 15.)

**Q20: *Do I have to submit a narrative statement addressing the KSA's listed in the vacancy announcement?***

A20: No. Vacancy announcements in FSJO do not list KSA's for the position. Instead, applicants are rated and ranked based on their responses to the position-specific questions. The questions are based on the duties of the position being filled and are designed to solicit information about the applicant's directly related experience. (Occasionally, some position-specific questions will require a brief narrative response.)

**Q21: *What if I want to change or update my resume?***

A21: Go to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov), and click on the "Login" button. Click on "Edit Personal Information," and press "Next." On the following screen, scroll down to the resume box and make any desired changes. Be sure to save it by going through the rest of the screens to "Finish."

**NOTE:** The system saves only one resume at a time. If an applicant applies for more than one job with the same closing date, only the most recent version of the resume will be saved. Applicants may update the resume at any time, however, revisions will not be processed for vacancies that have already closed.

**Q22: *My resume is too long. What can I do?***

A22: Applicants should only include relevant work experience (with short descriptions), education, and other qualifications that are relevant to the position for which applying. Resumes should be brief. Information on effective resumes can be found at [Monster.com](http://Monster.com).

**OTHER APPLICATION ISSUES**

**Q23: *Whenever I submit my application I get a "violation of primary or unique key constraint" error. What's wrong?***

A23: This error occurs when an applicant completes the online application, presses "Submit," then immediately presses the "Back" button to try to make changes. When the "Back" button is used on this screen, the system processes it like the applicant is trying to submit a new application for a job for which the applicant had already applied. Instead of using "Back," bring up the vacancy questions by clicking on the vacancy number from a vacancy listing page, or login again and pull up the vacancy. The screen will show the application completed with the previous answers, and the applicant can successfully update them without error.

**Q24: *Can I just mail my application, or send it by e-mail?***

A24: Applicants are expected to apply online for positions covered by the pilot. Contact the HR representative listed on the vacancy announcement **before the closing date** if problems occur.

**Q25: *For which positions must I apply online?***

A25: Applicants apply online for all positions in the pilot. This includes positions in the following series: GS-318, Secretary; GS-326, Office Automation Clerk/Assistant; GS -334, Computer Specialist; GS-344, Management Assistant; and Compliance Officer, GS-12 and -13. The HRD will announce when a new series is added.

Positions that are **not** in the pilot (such as those in the bargaining unit) will be advertised and filled using traditional procedures.

**Q26: *If the system only accepts online applications, should I submit other documents, such as college transcripts, or documents showing eligibility for special hiring authorities or placement programs?***

A26: For field vacancies (serviced by the Minneapolis HR office), applicants should mail or fax documents required by the vacancy announcement immediately after applying for a position. (**NOTE:** A fax number will be listed in the vacancy announcement.) The documents must be received in the HR office within 2 business days after the closing date. Any documents sent must include the applicant's name, SSN, the vacancy announcement number, and position title.

For headquarters vacancies (serviced by the Washington, DC HR office), applicants should not mail or fax documents until they are requested. (Follow the instructions in the vacancy announcement if it states otherwise.)

**Q27: *How is the demographic information (race, gender, national origin, and disability status) used?***

A27: Demographic data is immediately encrypted and cannot be tied to a specific candidate. Once the announcement closes, a demographic report can be generated. However, neither the HR office nor the selecting official can associate the demographic data to an individual applicant.

**Q28: *What if I need help applying?***

A28: Applicants should contact the HR representative listed on the vacancy announcement, before the closing date, if help is needed for a specific vacancy.

**Q29: *Is there any way I can see which positions I have applied for, or find out the status of these vacancies?***

A29: Applicants receive an e-mail confirmation of the application when their application is completed and submitted. Keep this as a record of the application. Applicants should also print a copy of the vacancy announcement itself, or make note of the vacancy announcement number, job title, and the name, telephone number, and e-mail address of the HR representative listed on the announcement. Questions about an application or the status of an announcement may be directed to that person. The HR representative will need a vacancy announcement number and job title to provide information.

**Q30: *Can the system notify me of vacancies when they occur?***

A30: Yes. FSJO will automatically send an e-mail notification when vacancies occur, if this option is chosen. Log in to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov) and select "Edit Personal Information." At the bottom of the screen are "Notification Preferences." **NOTE:** An applicant who chooses to be notified of "all vacancies" may receive numerous e-mails every day. Using the job series preference will limit notifications.

## **THE EVALUATION PROCESS**

### ***Q31: How is my application rated?***

A31: The system calculates a numerical rating based on responses to the position-specific questions.

### ***Q32: What do you mean by “position-specific” questions?***

A32: The HR specialist consults with subject matter experts to develop job-related questions that would distinguish superior candidates from those who are minimally qualified. Questions can have different weights and may be asked in a variety of a formats, such as: Yes/No, True/False, Number, Date, Short and Long Answer, Multiple Choice, Multiple Choice/Multiple Answer, and Matching.

### ***Q33: Who develops the “position-specific” questions?***

A33: HR specialists consult with the selecting official or subject-matter experts to determine the questions to be included in the vacancy announcement and the weight assigned to each question. (Subject-matter experts have an in-depth knowledge of the position being filled and what it takes to do the job well.)

### ***Q34: Are narrative responses required?***

A34: Occasionally, some position-specific questions will require a brief, narrative response.

### ***Q35: How are the narrative responses used?***

A35: A narrative response gives the applicant an opportunity to provide more specific information about their experience to the selecting official.

### ***Q36: Does the system rate and score my resume?***

A36: No. The system does not rate and assign a score to the resume or to any narrative statement. (Only the position-specific questions are rated.) HR specialists use the resume to determine an applicant’s basic eligibility. Selecting officials review resumes to assess and compare the qualifications of the candidates referred, and to assist in their selection decision.

### ***Q37: Are the “position-specific” questions rated instantly?***

A37: Yes, but the rating is not finalized until the announcement closes.

**Q38: *The system rates and ranks candidates, but are panels of subject-matter experts also used in the rating process?***

A38: FSJO eliminates the need for subject-matter panels to rate applications because the system rates and ranks the applicant's responses automatically. (See Q&A 40 for subject-matter expert use in the certification process.)

**Q39: *Since the system assigns a rating based on responses to the position-specific questions, what prevents me from providing inaccurate or misleading answers to the questions in a way that gives a higher score?***

A39: Falsifying or answering questions to mislead the system's automated process is no different than providing false or misleading information on an application under the old process. Applicants are reminded that this is a Federal job application system. For Federal employees, providing false information, creating fake ID's, or failing to answer all questions truthfully and completely may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including removal. Falsifying a Federal job application, or attempting to compromise this system is punishable by a fine or imprisonment.

**Q40: *How will the HR office verify my experience, education, and responses to the questions?***

A40: HR specialists (sometimes with assistance from a subject-matter expert) will review the resume and responses to the questions of applicants who are referred for selection consideration. For FSIS employees who are referred, the Official Personnel Folder may be used to verify information in the application. An individual's qualifications may also be verified through the interview process and by contacting the applicant's current and past supervisors.

**Q41: *If I am found ineligible, not referred for selection, or if I am not selected, whom should I contact to find out why?***

A41: An applicant who is found ineligible or not referred for a position will receive an e-mail from an HR representative explaining why. That person may be contacted for further information. The selecting official can be contacted for more information when an applicant is referred, but not selected.

## **LOGIN HELP**

**Q42:** *I forgot my password!*

A42: Follow these instructions if you forget your password:

Step	Action	
1	Go to <a href="http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov">www.foodsafetyjobs.gov</a> . Click the “Login” button. Scroll down and select the “Forgot your password?” option.	
2	Click the “Next” button.	
3	Enter the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your User ID (or, if you prefer, your e-mail address that you registered with)</li> <li>• Your zip code</li> <li>• Your date of birth</li> </ul>	
4	Click on the “Next” button.	
5	If your request was successful:	If your request was not successful:
	A screen will indicate that your request was successful, and that your password was changed to your zip code. Click "Return to Login" and login using your new password.	A screen will indicate that errors were encountered. This screen only appears if the information you entered in Step 3 does not match the information in your account. Use the "Back" button to correct the information. If still unsuccessful, call the HR contact office listed on the announcement for help.

For more Q&A's, go to [www.foodsafetyjobs.gov](http://www.foodsafetyjobs.gov).